

Dr. David L. Mathewson, New Testament Theology,

Session 13, The People of God in the New

Testament, Part 1

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is lecture 13, The People of God in the New Testament, Part 1.

We ended the last session by looking at Jesus as a true Israel.

So, like the other themes, the development of the theme of people of God in the Old Testament through to the prophetic expectation find their fulfillment first of all in Jesus. So, we saw that Jesus, even in the Gospels, Jesus is rehearsing, in a sense, recapitulating the story of Israel in his own life and ministry. And through even his early childhood, through the movements to Egypt and out, and then in the temptation, the temptation that Adam and Eve failed to, the testing they failed to pass, and the testing that Israel failed out, now Jesus passes.

So, Jesus is the true Israel, who fills and embodies the promise that made Israel and embodies God's intention for Israel, his people. But now I want to, we'll see that happening on a couple of other occasions, but I want you to note we'll look at a number of texts in the Gospels that demonstrate how Jesus begins to fulfill God's promise to Israel, especially the prophetic expectations, by now gathering a nucleus of people who will be the true people, the new people of God. And the starting point, probably the clearest starting point, is Jesus choosing 12 disciples.

I don't need to go back and read the text, but you find Jesus in the Gospels selecting 12 followers or 12 disciples who will be his people. Again, this is not just Jesus promoting small groups by choosing 12. There's a reason why Jesus chooses 12 disciples.

The number 12 is clearly reflective of the 12 tribes of Israel. So, it's almost as if the number 12, we'll see this too, when we get to the end of the Bible, to the new Jerusalem in Revelation 21, the number 12 often carries with it the significant feature, the significant meaning of people of God. It almost signifies or has a symbolic value for the people of God.

So, Jesus chose 12 disciples or 12 followers, which suggests continuity with the Old Testament people of God. The 12 disciples are modeled after the 12 tribes of Israel. So, Jesus is creating a nucleus of that will become the renewed Israel, the true people of God.

We also see this in Jesus establishing his church, Matthew chapter 16. Matthew chapter 16 and verse 18, the only time you find this word in the Gospels, Matthew, but first of all, in Matthew chapter 16 and verse 18, Jesus says, I'll back up and read 17. This is in the context of Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of the living God.

And Jesus replies, blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter. And on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it.

And then later on in chapter 18 and verse 17, in the context of how Jesus instructs his disciples to deal with sin in the church of this new assembly, he says, truly, I tell you, let's see, verse 17, I'm sorry, chapter 18, verse 17. If they refuse to listen, tell it to the church. And if they refuse to listen, even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or tax collector.

Now, what I want to focus on is the word church. I think we do an injustice to this text when we read it too much in light of our modern conceptions of the church. So, we envision a building with people meeting in it, then they have a pastor and elders and deacons and a choir and a secretary, and they take an offering and it's all well-structured, et cetera, et cetera.

Yet at this point, the word church that Jesus uses, the Greek term *ecclesia*, is a term that is used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament to often refer to the assembly of God's people, Israel. So by referring to a group called the church here in Matthew, I don't think Matthew is at this point, or Jesus is envisioning our modern-day churches and structures and something that has a doctrinal statement and constitution, et cetera, et cetera. But simply, Jesus is expressing the fact that there is a new assembly that he envisions, a new assembly that he is creating based on, built on this nucleus of 12 disciples, a new assembly in analogy to, or in continuity with the assembly, the *ecclesia* of the church, I'm sorry, the *ecclesia* or the assembly of God's people, Israel.

So once more, Jesus, I think, has deliberately chosen a term we translate at church, but again, don't let that conjure up too many notions of what we think of at church in the 21st century. The term church is once again that in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament often was used for Israel, a term that can simply mean an assembly, a gathering of people. Jesus simply indicates the fact that he is now creating, establishing, or building an assembly of people in continuity with his assembly, his people in the Old Testament.

Another text in the gospels or another notion in the gospels that demonstrates Jesus' intention to create an assembly that centers around him, gather a group of followers, a people to create a people-centered on him and around him is found in texts such as

John chapter 10, where Jesus describes himself as the true shepherd who gathers his sheep: John chapter 10 and verses 7 and 11. In John 10 and verses 7 and 11, we read this, therefore Jesus says again, truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.

All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved.

They will come and go out and find pasture. In verse 11, Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So, when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs for them. But then, in verse 14, Jesus reiterates, I am the good shepherd.

I know my sheep, and my sheep knows me. Now, what is significant about that? I think once more, Jesus is not just drawing on the theme of being a shepherd. We see similar language, I think, in Luke chapter 12 and verse 32, Jesus says, do not be afraid, little flock, for your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

So, Jesus addresses his group of followers as a little flock. Now, he doesn't call himself a shepherd there, but it implies that he is the shepherd of this flock. A number of Jesus' parables have to do with a shepherd.

You remember Luke chapter 15 begins with a shepherd who goes out and finds a lost sheep. So, what is significant about all of this? At one level, we could say, is Jesus simply using a common metaphor to describe his relationship to his people as a shepherd to his sheep? Well, yes, that's certainly true. However, if you go back to the book of Ezekiel, it's interesting that God describes his relationship with his people as a shepherd and describes his people as sheep.

Let me read just part of verse 20, chapter 34 of Ezekiel. I'll just read sections of it. It begins, the word of the Lord came to me, son of man, addressing Ezekiel, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, this is what the Sovereign Lord says, woe to you, shepherds of Israel, who only take care of yourselves.

You should, should not, shepherds take care of the flock. So, the leaders of Israel are seen as shepherds, and Israel is seen as the flock, the sheep that needs to be taken care of. So he chides the leaders as inappropriate shepherds who have not done their job.

In verse seven, he says, therefore, you shepherds hear what the Lord says as surely as I live declares the Lord because my flock lacks a shepherd. And so has been plundered and become food for all the wild animals. And because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than the flock.

Therefore, you shepherds hear the word of the Lord. This is what the Lord said. I am against the shepherds, and I will hold them accountable.

Then, verse 11, for this is what the Sovereign Lord says. I myself will search for my sheep and look after them as a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them.

So, will I look after my sheep? I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on the day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and we'll bring them into their own land.

I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel in the ravines and all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in good pasture and mountains, and the mountain Heights of Israel will be their grazing land. So, notice that in Ezekiel 34, in the context of restoration, once more, Ezekiel 34 goes with 36 and 37, and in the context of restoration, God will be his shepherd.

God will be the shepherd. The nation of Israel is like the sheep that has been scattered, and God, the shepherd, will gather and restore his sheep. He will gather them together unto himself.

But interestingly, if you go back to chapter 37 of Ezekiel, go further once more in the context of restoration and new covenant, notice what the author says: my servant, David, will be king over them, and he will, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. So apparently, David himself, then the son of David himself, a king in David's line, will be the shepherd over the people of God.

Now, with that in mind, go back to these New Testament texts I've read concerning Jesus as the shepherd and his followers as his sheep with Jesus, the true shepherd gathering a sheep. I think we find the fulfillment of Ezekiel 34. Now God is beginning to gather his sheep, his dispersed sheep through Jesus Christ, who now gathers his sheep, his followers, and his disciples.

In other words, Jesus in fulfillment of Ezekiel 34, Jesus is beginning to gather a new flock, a new people that will now center around him, who will respond to him in trust and faith and obedience, the true shepherd who is Jesus Christ. Another theme that points to the theme of the people of God in fulfillment of the promises of the old covenant has to do with John chapter 15 and Jesus being the one who tends the vineyard. So, if you go back to John chapter 15, which is a lengthy section concerning the vine and the branches, again, I'll just read part of this, but it begins with Jesus saying, I am the true vine, and my father is the gardener.

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will bear even more fruit. You are already clean because of the words I have spoken to you. So, remain in me as I remain in you.

No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing.

If you remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Then it's picked up and thrown in the fire.

If you remain in me and my words in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done. I'll stop right there, but notice the picture of Jesus as the vine, the father as the vinedresser or the gardener, and the people as the branches that belong to the vine. Again, I am convinced that Jesus is doing more than just using a convenient horticultural metaphor to describe his relationship with his people.

Again, the vine and branch metaphor is one, or the vine or vineyard metaphor is one that you find referring to Israel back in the Old Testament. There are a number of texts that we could look at, but one of them is Isaiah chapters 5 and 1 through 7. Isaiah chapter 5 and verses 1 through 7. I will sing a song about his vineyard for the one I love. My loved one has a vineyard on fertile hills.

He dug it up, cleared it of stones, and planted it with the choicest finds. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a wine press as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.

Now, you dwellers in Jerusalem and people in Judah judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I look for good grapes, what do I yield? Why did it yield only bad? Now I will tell you what I'm going to do with my vineyard. I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed.

I will break down its wall. It will be trampled. I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briars and thorns will grow there.

I will command the clouds not to rain on it. The vineyard of the Lord God Almighty is the nation of Israel. So now God interprets it for us.

And the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in. And he looked for justice, but he saw bloodshed for righteousness, but he heard cries of distress. So, what I think is going on now in John 15 is Jesus has now come to restore the true vine.

The true vine back in Isaiah 5 refused to bear fruit. Now Jesus comes to restore the true vine of God's people that will now bear fruit if they remain in him. So by calling his followers, once again Jesus addressing his followers, by calling them the vine and Jesus being the true vineyard and God the vinedresser, I think Jesus is suggesting that the true vine of Israel that refused to produce fruit is now being renewed and restored to produce the fruit that God intended it to produce by abiding and remaining in Jesus Christ.

That is his disciples; this nucleus will form the foundation according to Matthew 16 and 18, which will form the foundation for the entire assembly of God's people. One could also, I think one could also at the very tail end of all this, include Jesus' great commission at the end of Matthew 28, I'm sorry, the end of Matthew 28, where he tells them to go and make disciples of all nations and baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to do all that I've commanded. I will be with you to the end of the ages.

I think we now see the people of God expanding to include people from all nations of the earth. So, in conclusion to the teaching of Jesus, particularly in the gospels, I think we find that Jesus Christ is the beginning of the renewed Israel. Jesus Christ is the true Israel, the one who brings Israel's promises and intention and God's intention for Israel to completion and fulfillment.

And then, through Jesus Christ, God is now beginning to renew Israel and to create a new covenant community, a new people of God in the age of fulfillment and in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophetic expectations. The difference now is that membership in God's people is no longer restricted to or based on ethnicity, that is, belonging to the nation of Israel, but now its sole requirement is faith in Jesus Christ or a relationship to Jesus Christ, who is the true Jew, who is the true fulfillment of Israel's destiny and Israel's promises. So again, we saw that the promises begin; I'm sorry, but the theme of the people of God begins very broadly with Adam and Eve in the context of all creation.

It narrows down to Abraham and to the nation of Israel. It undergoes another narrowing in the person of Jesus Christ, who fulfills God's purposes through Abraham and Israel, but then it will get expanded out. It's beginning to expand by now. Jesus chose a nucleus of followers in the form of his disciples, who are the foundation of and the nucleus of a new people of God that Jesus is creating, that is centered around him and related to him based on faith in his person.

So, Jesus chose twelve disciples as the nucleus of his people. He's come to establish a church, a new assembly of God's people. He is the true shepherd who now gathers the sheep of God's people.

He is the true vine, and his people are the branches. So, it's through Jesus Christ that a new community, a new Israel, a new people of God is now created in fulfillment of the Old Testament people of God and prophetic expectations of a renewed restored people of God. Now, to move beyond the Gospels to the book, we'll start with the book of Acts and then kind of follow canonically.

We'll look at some examples in the Pauline literature of how the theme of people of God gets developed. I'll look at a couple of examples in other epistles and then end up with the book of Revelation and what it says about the people of God. But starting with the book of Acts, we find rather interesting the expansion of the people of God to include Gentiles.

But it starts in chapter 2 with God's promises and God's people in Jerusalem and Judea, eventually spreading out to Samaria and then to the ends of the earth, or some translations say the uttermost parts of the earth. Acts chapter 1, verse 8, in a sense, provides the rough outline for the rest of the book. So, chapter 2 begins in Jerusalem and then Judea, and then it ends up in Samaria in Chapter 8, I believe, and then it ends up expanding to the ends of the earth.

So, Acts chapter 8 ends with Paul in Rome, which would sort of be the proverbial end of the earth in Paul's day. But the point is what is going on here, and this is demonstrated in Acts chapter 1, verse 8. In Acts chapter 1, verse 8, we find that statement, you will be my witnesses, and I will pour my spirit out in you. I will give you my spirit, and you will be my witness in Judea, Jerusalem, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Most of those phrases actually come right out of the book of Isaiah. The giving of the Holy Spirit, being witnesses, Israel was to be God's witness, and they were to witness eventually to the ends of the earth. That phrase the ends of the earth is verbatim from the book of Isaiah.

So, what is going on in Acts, I think, is Acts is at one level, a demonstration of how God's promises through Isaiah to restore his people and to eventually extend those people to the ends of the earth get fulfilled. So, it starts with God's people, basically his Jewish people in Jerusalem and Judea, and then the book of Acts is basically an account of how God's church and God's promises and how salvation moves to lesser and lesser Jewish territories to embrace groups of people that are more and more Gentile. So again, it ends with Paul and Rome.

Another interesting feature in the context of that is two things. Number one, why do you have the order Jerusalem, Judea, and then Samaria? If you recall, in some of the prophetic texts, God's intention was to restore both the southern and the northern kingdoms, the capital of which would have been Samaria and the southern kingdom of Judah, Jerusalem. So, you have the gospel beginning in Jerusalem and Judea, the southern kingdom, and then eventually Samaria, which would have been the northern kingdom, and that interesting account in Acts of how what happened in the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 happened in Samaria as well, so that you have the uniting of the people of God in fulfillment of Isaiah and Ezekiel and Jeremiah, which anticipate the new covenant restoring and reuniting the 12 tribes of Israel.

So, the northern and southern tribes are reunited in consistent with the Old Testament prophetic expectations. Another interesting account in Acts chapter 1 is why you have that account of a 12th apostle. Remember, Judas has defected, so you are essentially going into Acts, Jesus' death and resurrection, and then going into the book of Acts chapter 1, where you only have 11 apostles. Why does the author of Acts make a big deal out of choosing a 12th one? Again, this signifies the restoration of the people of God, the restoration of the 12 tribes of Israel.

So, remember, the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ are modeled after the 12 tribes of Israel. It demonstrates Jesus' intention to renew and restore his people in fulfillment of the Old Testament. And so, by choosing a 12th apostle, we find Acts beginning to record in fulfillment of Isaiah and other Old Testament expectations of the restoration of God's people.

We now find that beginning to be fulfilled with the choosing of a 12th apostle and also with the gospel going out from embracing Jerusalem and Samaria as well. And then, in the rest of the book of Acts, we said also consistent with Isaiah's program of restoration where Gentiles come in, where God's glory spreads to the ends of the earth, to the uttermost parts of the earth. We find the gospel going out to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And again, chapter 28 ends with Paul and the gospel of the kingdom going all the way to Rome. So, Acts itself seems to be an account of how the Old Testament promises and expectations of the restoration of God's people in a new covenant relationship are now beginning to be fulfilled. Following Jesus' death and resurrection, this community that Jesus began to create is now how it is going to expand in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophetic text and promises.

Another passage that we've already looked at is Ephesians chapter 2, verses 11 through 22, where Paul envisions the uniting of Jews and Gentiles into one new humanity based on the death of Jesus Christ on the cross to bring about peace. We've already noted in a couple of occasions that latent in Paul's language are

allusions back to the book of Isaiah. Texts dealing with the restoration of God's people.

And so some of that language of near and far is bringing peace. And we said it even ends with the establishment of God's temple dwelling with his people. All of that presupposes the restoration of God's people in fulfillment of Isaiah's promises of restoration.

So that the uniting of Jew and Gentile that has taken place in the person of Jesus Christ is part of the creation of a new humanity, a restoration of a new people of God in fulfillment of God's intention to restore and renew his people, especially in the book of Isaiah, we've also spent quite a bit of time already on New Covenant. And I said the New Covenant presupposes people of God.

And when you go back to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the New Covenant passages are in the context of the restoration of God's people to the land. Exemplified, for example, by the fulfillment of the New Covenant, exemplified by the gift of the Holy Spirit, 2 Corinthians 3 and 2 Corinthians 6 and verse 16 that quotes a New Covenant text. But the point is, if the New Covenant has already been inaugurated, if the New Covenant is now a reality and has been enacted through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ if the New Covenant is a reality, then the restoration of God's people must already be taking place in fulfillment of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

So once more, the New Covenant, which is expressed most clearly in the covenant formula, I will be their God, and they will be my people, clearly suggests that the promises of restoring a new people, of God restoring his people, Israel, and entering into a New Covenant relationship with them, is now being fulfilled in this new people of God that Jesus began to create by gathering these twelve disciples or apostles. And now, as we saw in Acts, expanding to embrace Gentiles. Now is the scene in light of the New Covenant in fulfillment of God's promises of restoration.

Now, another way to put it is another way to ask the question, how do these promises in the Old Testament, in Isaiah and Ezekiel, in fact, the whole theme of the people of God, climaxing in the prophetic expectations of the restoration of God's people now that they've been carted off into exile, how will God restore those promises? Another way of phrasing the question is, who are the true children of Abraham? Who is the true seed of Abraham? Now, most in the first century and before, most Jewish sects would have answered that by, well, those who are ethnically children of Abraham. Those who belong to the physical line of Abraham. Those who are true Israelites ethnically and nationally.

Those are the seed of Abraham. But I want to return to a text we've looked at to see again how Paul answers that. And that is Galatians chapter 3. In Galatians chapter 3, we see that Paul is actually answering this question.

Who are the true children of Abraham? Because the Judaizers that he is dealing with are trying to force Gentiles to be circumcised for males to submit to circumcision, for everyone else to keep the law, the food laws, and the Sabbath, as a sign that they are the true people of God physically and ethically. And so, the question that's being raised even in Galatians is, who are the true children of Abraham? Who are those who participate in the promises made to Abraham? And Paul then answers that, tackles that question head on. So, starting in verse 16 of chapter 3, Paul says the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.

Scripture does not say to seeds, meaning many people, but to your seed, meaning one person, who is Christ. So, Paul sees, consistent with Matthew chapter 1 and verse 1, that Jesus is the son of Abraham. Consistent with Matthew, Paul also sees Jesus as the true seed of Abraham.

Paul is much more explicit about it. The seed of Abraham is none other than Jesus Christ. So, there's that narrowing again.

The climaxes and reaches a point in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the true fulfillment of the promise of Abraham's seed. But notice what Paul does, a text that we already referred to, when you get to the very end of Galatians chapter 3. Galatians chapter 3 in verse 29, Paul goes on and says, if you belong to Christ, then you, the church, the Galatians, you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to his promise.

So, notice how it works. First of all, the promise of the people of God through Abraham, the promise of a seed of Abraham, gets fulfilled, first of all, in Jesus Christ. Then, it extends to include his followers by virtue of their belonging to Christ.

So, Paul, the key to verse 29 is verse 16. That is, you are Abraham's seed if you belong to Christ. Who is the seed of Abraham? Chapter 3, verse 16.

So what Paul is saying, I think in Galatians 3, is the true people of God, the true seed of Abraham, the true intention of God to fulfill his promises to God's people, to bring about a people, is fulfilled ultimately in Jesus Christ, the true seed of Abraham, and then in his people who belong to him in faith, who also become the seed of Abraham. And again, what I find interesting in the text like this is Paul does not include, again, he's addressing Gentiles in the churches in Galatia. It's interesting that Paul does not say you are the nation blessed through Abraham.

Instead, he says, you are actually Abraham's seed because you belong to the true physical seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ. Notice also, perhaps much like we find in Jesus' words in John 15, notice Paul's use of the tree and branch metaphor in

Romans chapter 11. Again, I won't read the section in its entirety, but I do want to mention a couple of things about it.

Revelation chapter 11 and verses 13 through 24. I don't think I'll read all of that, but I will start with verse 16. If the part of the dough offered as a first fruit is holy, then the whole batch is holy.

If the root is holy, so also are the branches. If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not consider yourselves to be superior to those other branches. If you do not consider this, you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

You will tell them that the branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in. Granted, but they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble.

But if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Now, all of this is in the context in Romans 11 of the fact that there is one vine, and there are two branches. There are the natural branches and the wild branches.

The natural branches are God's people, Israel, and the wild branches are the Gentiles. But they are both grafted into the same vine so that you do not have two separate people. You have one people of God connected to the exact same vine in Romans 11.

Furthermore, I find it interesting that Paul is using the tree and branch metaphor, which once more seems to reflect that similar language you find in John chapter 15 of the branches and the vine. Paul probably chose this metaphor intentionally because it is one used in the Old Testament to refer to the people of God. But now, the true people of God consist of both the natural branches and wild branches that can be grafted in.

So again, you have one people of God, not two separate ones in Romans 11. Another interesting feature in the Pauline literature that goes back to an element of the people of God that we discussed already is that Paul often refers to his churches in his letters as the elect, the chosen, or the loved ones. Now, we could take that language and ask questions about whether the election language is better understood and whether predestination language is better understood within an Arminian or a Calvinistic framework.

Those are very important, necessary, and valid discussions. But for our purposes, I simply want to look at this terminology and what it says about the people of God. For

example, in Romans chapter 1 and verse 7, and most of these texts I'll read, a couple of them are at the very beginning of letters as Paul begins to address his people.

But verse 11, I'm sorry, verse 7 of Romans chapter 1, to all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people. Ephesians chapter 1 and verses 3 and 4, so keep that Romans text in your mind for just a moment, and we'll come back to summarize how this relates to the theme of people of God. But Ephesians chapter 1, verses 3 and 4, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that the language of Father, God, and Father may not only just be nice familial language but probably expresses covenant language as well. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ, for he chose us in him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight in love. He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ.

So, notice again Paul describes his readers as those who've been chosen by God from the foundation of the world and those who are loved by God and have been predestined by him. And last, although we could point to a number of others, the last text I want to look at is Colossians chapter 3 and verse 12. Notice how Paul describes the Colossian Christians, again Gentile Christians or the church that he's addressing in Colossae.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly beloved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Now again, once more, we could ask, oh, what is meant by choosing an election? Is it better understood in the Arminian or Calvinistic framework or some other framework? But if you recall, the language of choosing and loving God's people comes right out of the expressions in the Old Testament of God's relationship to Israel. To go back to just one text that we've already read as a demonstration of this, Deuteronomy chapter 7 and verses 7 and 8, the Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than all the other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.

But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to his ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. So, this is sort of just simply one more link in this chain of references that one finds in the Old Testament referring to Israel now applied to the church as the new people of God. So, I would suggest that we should probably look elsewhere in the New Testament when we find the language of God choosing his people, the language of his love for his people.

Yeah, there are a lot of things going on, and we should read the language of him loving us in its full emotive impact. But at the same time, we should also see the

connection with God's love and choosing of his people, Israel, in the Old Testament. Now in the same way, God's new people are also chosen and loved by God.

We see something similar in the redemption from slavery imagery. Colossians 1 and 12-13. The author describes his people this way.

I'll back up and start reading verse 12. And give thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people and kingdom of light. We talked about that connection with inheritance being the language of inheriting the land.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the son that he loves in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Now notice that language of the new covenant again, the forgiveness of sins. But I want to focus on that language of redemption that he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his son in whom we have redemption.

I would suggest to you once more that this redemption language, and we'll talk about this more in connection with the theme of salvation and the biblical theological theme of new exodus later on in this course. But what I want to focus on is that language of redemption and its connection with exodus. Exodus chapter 6 and verses 6 and 7 is a text that we have already read again in connection with the Old Testament's development of the theme of people of God.

But Exodus chapters 6 and 6 and 7 say this, therefore saying to the Israelites, I am the Lord your God. I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with my outstretched arms.

So, what we have going on here rather than in Paul's letters seems to be with this redemption language, and this may be true of redemption language elsewhere. You also find Paul referring to redemption as what God accomplishes through Christ on behalf of his people in Romans 3; in that text that we read again, we'll spend more time on this one later. But in Romans chapter 3, Paul says, God presented him, let's see, verse 23, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.

That comes then through his blood in verse 25. Now, I'd suggest to you then that this redemption language ultimately goes back to the redemption language found in the context of God rescuing his people from Egypt, especially the reference in Colossians chapters 1:12 and 13 that I read. So, in the same way that God redeemed his people from slavery, redeemed the people out of slavery in the Old Testament, in the same way God is redeeming his new people.

God is redeeming his new people out of slavery and bondage. He says you were once in bondage, you were once in slavery in darkness, but now he has taken you out and transferred you into his kingdom of his beloved son through whom you have redemption. So it's as if in a new exodus, in the same way, God led his people out in the first exodus and redeemed them to be his own people, now once more he is leading his people out and redeeming them in a new exodus to make them as a people unto himself.

Another important theme I think related to the notion of the church as the people of God in fulfillment of the Old Testament, God's intention for Israel, and the prophetic expectations of restored people, is found in Ephesians chapter 5, in Paul's letters. Ephesians chapter 5 is the lengthy section where Paul compares the relationship between a husband and wife to the relationship between Christ and the church. And so, I'll just read; let me start with verse 25.

Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to prepare her to himself, to present him to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies, he who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body just as Christ does the church.

For we are members of his body. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery, but I'm talking about Christ and the church.

Now, once more, there are all kinds of things that could be said about this passage, but the point I want to make is that it's interesting that Paul seems to be arguing that more than just addressing how wives and husbands should treat each other and relate to each other, is he compares Jesus' relationship to the church as a husband's relationship to his wife, or as the relationship of Jesus to his people now, in loving it and nurturing it, is compared to what the husband should do for his wife. What is interesting, though, is the relationship between God and his people under the Old Covenant in the Old Testament, which is frequently described as the relationship of a husband to his wife. That's why whenever Israel strays, it's often depicted as adultery, as unfaithfulness.

Israel is often seen as an unfaithful wife, because the covenant relationship between God and Israel is often seen as the covenant relationship between a husband and his wife. So now, by Paul transferring that metaphor of husband and wife to the church, it's as if he's again saying there's continuity between God's new people that now is

created and centers around the person of Christ. There's continuity between that and God's people, Israel.

Now, here is God's new bride. Here is God's new wife. Here is Jesus' bride, his wife, his people, the church.

You find this, for example, in Isaiah's chapter... There are a number of texts, particularly in Isaiah. Isaiah is often fond of using bride and marriage and nuptial imagery to describe God's relationship to the church. God's relationship to the nation of Israel.

And then again, adultery imagery. You find that in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and elsewhere to describe when Israel is unfaithful to God. But in Isaiah chapter 54, we find one example of how the restoration of God's people... Isaiah 54 is a prophecy, once more, of the restoration of God restoring his people in the future, now that they are in exile.

In chapter 54, Sing, barren woman, you who never bore a child. Burst into song, shout for joy, you who are never in labor, because more are the children of a desolate woman than of her who has a husband, says the Lord. Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch out your tent, and widen the curtains.

Do not hold back; lengthen the cords and strengthen your stakes, for you will spread out to the right and to the left. Your descendants will dispossess the nations and settle in their desolate cities. Actually, I want to skip down just a little bit.

Verse 4, Do not be afraid, you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace, and you will not be humiliated. You will not forget the shame of your youth.

And remember no more the reproach of your widowhood. So now Israel is seen as being widowed, now that they've gone off in exile. Verse 5, For your maker, for God, is your husband.

The Lord Almighty is his name. The Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer. He is called the God of all the earth.

So now God is seen as the husband who will call back his people who have been widowed, but now he will call back his people. So, behind this is once more the nuptial or marriage imagery. God is the husband, and Israel is the wife.

This may be further indicated too, at least partially, in verses 11 and 12, a verse we read already. Afflicted city lashed by storms and not comforted, I will rebuild your stones with turquoise, your foundations with lapis lazuli. I will make your

battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones.

And your children will be taught by the Lord and great will be their peace. In other words, by portraying the restoration of Jerusalem as in terms of precious jewels, part of the imagery may also be bridal imagery, that now you see Jerusalem decked out as a bride and all these precious jewels for her husband. But clearly, in chapter 54 of Isaiah, behind this lies this comparing God's relationship to Israel, his covenant relationship with them, as the relationship between a husband and his wife.

And so, with Paul in Ephesians 5, Paul utilizes marriage imagery and husband and wife imagery to refer to Jesus' relationship to the church, Paul establishes a connection between the New Testament people of God, the church, and the Old Testament people of God. Again, God's intention for his people. God's intention for his people in the Old Testament, his people Israel, was ruined because of exile because of sin, but the expectation of a restoration of God's people is now prophesied, now is fulfilled in the new people of God, the church.

And Paul demonstrates that I think, by all these numerous connections, the utilizing language and Old Testament text of restoration to describe the uniting of Jew and Gentile, the new covenant language, I will be your God, you will be my people, now applied to the church, the fact that the church is the true seed of Abraham, the utilization of tree branch metaphor, the language of being elected and loved, the language of redemption from slavery, and now the husband and wife metaphor, all language that one found in the Old Testament to refer to the people of Israel is now taken to refer to the New Testament, the new covenant people of God. So that the church is to be seen at least at some level and in some way as continuous with or having continuity with the people of God and of Israel, but I'd remind you again that the key factor, I think even for Paul, especially as seen in the Galatians passage, Galatians 3, is that Jesus Christ, first of all, is a true Israel.

And then his people who gather around him, who are united to him in faith, then likewise become the true people of God. And we've seen that the key element of that is the shift that has taken place between the Old and New Testament in that no longer is belonging to the people of God nationally and ethnically defined, but now membership in the true people of God, the true identifying feature of God's people is faith in Jesus Christ. So, in the next section, we'll move outside of Paul's letters, and we'll look at text in the rest of the New Testament ending in the book of Revelation that further developed this theme of people of God.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is lecture 13, The People of God in the New Testament, Part 1.